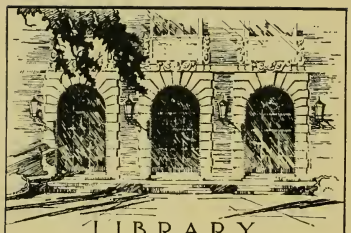

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

26.

[Private and Confidential.]

A WORD TO THE CLERGY

ON THE

UNION OF CHURCH AND STATE.

The relationship existing between the Church and the State having been much strained by recent events, it is deemed of much importance that the Clergy should have placed before them the following considerations on the subject, to which their serious attention is earnestly requested.

The spiritual work of a clergyman in his parish is greatly assisted—

1. By the independent position he holds as possessor of a freehold.
2. By his being the *authorised* teacher in spiritual matters of all his parishioners.
3. By his income (great or small) being secured to him from a source over which his parishioners have no control.

It is because of this independent position their right of access to all parishioners, and the stability of their income, that the English Clergy have a power and opportunity to do spiritual work which are denied to others less favourably situated than themselves. It is these combined advantages that make the Clergy of the Church of England the freest and most unfettered body of any Clergy in Christendom.

These advantages have accrued to the Clergy from the English Church having been from the earliest times the National Church of this country recognised by the State as the authorised teacher of religion to the people.

The separation of Church and State would deprive the Clergy of their freehold, make them ministers of congregations who chose

to acknowledge them, instead of Pastors of all their people, and cause them to be dependent for their daily bread on the free will offerings of those willing to accept their spiritual ministrations.

The independence of the Clergy both in the parish and the pulpit would thus be seriously impaired and their power for effecting spiritual good amongst their parishioners grievously hindered.

But this is only one of the dangers that would arise to spiritual work from the separation of Church and State. The primitive faith of the Church Catholic is now enshrined in our Book of Common Prayer. Disestablishment would give to a National Synod, composed of Bishops, Clergy, and Laity, *with unlimited powers* to alter or amend it in any sense which the majority of the Synod chose to adopt.*

Moreover, on the integrity of the Prayer Book depends the integrity of the Anglican Communion. A mutilated Prayer Book would not be accepted by the Church of New Zealand, the Church of South Africa, or the Churches of Canada and Australia, or it may be any of the Churches now in communion with us. The effect of Disestablishment might thus be to break up the existing Anglican Communion into a dozen or more separate Churches. This is by no means an impossible result, or one to be lightly passed over by those who are inclined to think that Disestablishment might lead to the progress of the Church and the advance of her spiritual work.

It is commonly supposed that Disestablishment would free the Church from all control by the State. This by no means follows as a matter of course, as the present Prime Minister has himself assured us some years after Irish Church Disestablishment. He has declared that "the rights of the Clergy and people, and *of the State on their behalf, extend indeed far beyond temporalities.*" † To have a disestablished Church free to choose its own Bishops and to

* It was only the fundamental rule passed during the first few days of the first meeting of the General Synod in Ireland, forbidding any change to be made in the Prayer Book without the consent of two-thirds of the Bishops, two-thirds of the Clergy, and two-thirds of the Laity, that saved the Irish Prayer Book from immediate and drastic revision.

† The Church in Italy.—*Church Quarterly Review*, October 1875.

UIUC

exercise ecclesiastical rights hitherto possessed by the Crown, "would be something dangerously near to at least a theoretical absolutism." * The duty of the State "*as trustee for the people*, and as having heretofore given its authority to laws for the Church," is not only "to leave her in a condition to pass such laws for herself," but also "to take care that *the people should be parties to those laws*." * On such principles as these it would be perfectly possible to disestablish the Church, and at the same time substitute the authority of the people over it for the authority of the State.

What safeguard then have English Churchmen if Disestablishment should take place that the independence of the Clergy for spiritual work, or the integrity of the Prayer Book would be preserved for a single year?

These perils are worthy the serious and most anxious consideration, at this time, of every faithful Churchman.

Again, Disestablishment would substitute the authority of Ecclesiastical Courts established by the will of a majority of a National Synod for the authority of the existing Courts.

Would the Clergy or the Church at large be the gainers by such a change? Such Courts would be governed by laws enacted by the National Synod. But these laws in all cases in which property was affected would still be subject to revision by the highest existing civil tribunal of the land.

Should we have any guarantee that their decisions would be more trustworthy, more important, more in accordance with ecclesiastical law than those of our existing Courts?

Remember also that their decisions as far as the Clergy are concerned would be final and without appeal except to purely civil Courts. A minority in a National Synod has no rights. It must submit absolutely to its authority or secede.

Would Disestablishment then be any certain cure for the evils from which we are suffering? Might it not create others far greater than those we are now called upon to endure?

Would it not be a wiser, more Christian, and thoroughly Churchlike policy to repudiate altogether a movement inaugurated by the

---

* The Church in Italy.—*Church Quarterly Review*, October 1875

Church's bitterest foes, and supported with all their power by the enemies of all true religion in this country, and to seek instead such an amelioration of the existing relations of Church and State, as will give the Church an adequate voice in the regulation of her own affairs and so remove most of the existing evils of which we complain.

Patience under trial is God's way to good. Impatient action may end in deplorable and lasting evil.

We have said nothing here about Disendowment. Its effect can best be described in the words of the Bishop of Lincoln, "In my Diocese," said the Bishop, "it would pauperise the Priesthood and paganise the poor."

A. T. L.